

Leeds Diocesan Synod

DRAFT Minutes of the nineteenth meeting of the Synod of the Diocese of Leeds held via Zoom conferencing at 9.30 am on Saturday, 16 June 2021.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Bishop of Leeds had signed a Bishop's Instrument, which permitted the Synod to meet via electronic conferencing. This was the second time the Synod had met with full electronic presence.

Chair: The Bishop of Leeds

Ecumenical observers, Honorary Assistant Bishops, visitors and those in attendance were reminded that they were not entitled to vote and that they must seek the Chair's permission to speak. The voting period for electronic polling would be thirty seconds from the launch of the poll. Any technical issues were to be emailed to Jonathan Wood, Diocesan Secretary and the Diocesan Communications Team would be using social media to provide a live general commentary on Synod.

Members were notified that a report document for Synod members in the form of an executive summary of each Synod would be emailed a few days after the Synod.

1. Opening Prayer, Welcome and Apologies.

The Bishop of Leeds opened the Synod with prayers.

Thanks were given to The Revd Canon Sam Corley and Mr Matthew Ambler for their service during the triennium as Chairs of the House of Clergy and Laity respectively.

The following were welcomed and given the Chair's permission to speak:

Item 6: 2020 Leeds DBF Accounts for noting and Item 7 Costs Review - Geoff Park, Chief Finance Officer.

Item 8: Living in Love & Faith: Diocesan Living in Love & Faith Advocates - Katherine-Alice Grasham, Sarah Hobbs, The Revd Derek Jones, Marilyn Banister

Item 9 Motion and Presentation: Annual Reports from Boards and Committees, Chris Tate, Diocesan (Director of Communications) and Richard Earnshaw (Social and Digital Media Officer).

Item 11: Introductory Presentation - "Saving Creation: Strategic action to combat climate change", Jemima Parker, Environment Officer.

12 apologies had been received.

2. Declarations of interest – Members are reminded of the need to declare any conflict of interest on matters on this agenda.

No declarations of interest were given.

Chair: The Revd Canon Sam Corley

3. Minutes of the last Meeting on 13 March 2021.

Circulated paper: DS 21 06 01

The Chair moved:

“That the draft minutes of the last meeting held on 13 March 2021 contained in DS 21 06 01 be approved as a correct record.”

The minutes were approved.

Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the Agenda (if any).

There were no matters arising.

4. Presidential Address.

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

5. Questions to Synod

No formal written questions had been received.

6. Motion: 2020 Leeds DBF Accounts for noting.

Circulated paper: DS 21 06 02

Motion: “That the 2020 Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance Annual report and Financial Statements contained in DS 21 06 02 be noted”.

Proposer: Canon Mr Irving Warnett (Bishop’s Nominee)

Canon Mr Irving Warnett gave an overview of the circulated 2020 Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance Annual Report and Financial Statements. There had been a £2m reduction in parish share receipts in 2020. However, due to the measures the diocese had taken, the receipt of Covid support monies from the National Church and a generous private donation from an individual, there was a small surplus which was a better result than had been expected. In addition, there was £6.1m of unrestricted free reserves (ie cash). However, if the current share payments level continued, a potential £3m of reserves would be needed to support the work of the diocese. This would take the reserves figure below the assessed minimum level of £4m. There was uncertainty following the Covid pandemic when the parish share contributions

would recover. If recovery wasn't made in 2022 then the reserves would be insufficient. The Finance Assets and Investments Committee and the Board were keeping a watch on this and reviewing costs without damaging mission. The recovery of parish share was vital and the use of PCC cash reserves to act collectively with the diocese's use of reserves was needed to mutually support parishes. Parishes should adopt a "welcome back" approach to build up congregations and aim to achieve a 2019 level of share if possible. It was not the time to build parish cash reserves but to work together as a whole diocese to ensure the flourishing of the kingdom of God in the diocese.

Geoff Park (GP) spoke to a PowerPoint presentation, which had been circulated to members before the meeting. He highlighted that the end of year surplus had been very surprising given the Covid context and a £2m reduction of parish share receipts.

Summary income statement

Income had been falling over recent years, partly due to the reduction of the income from the National Church and falling parish share receipts. Parish share receipts were 15% lower than in 2019. He thanked those who had made significant efforts and sacrifices to pay parish share in the difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

The diocese had received monies from the National Church's Sustainability Grant scheme of just over £1m. When the diocese's application for a Sustainability Grant from the National Church, it was not known that the diocese would also receive a private donation of £1m.

Income from Parcevall Hall was reduced as it had been closed for a large part of 2020; however there was also a reduction in costs too.

The diocese had received £244k in Government support under its job retention scheme to furlough staff. The staff who had gone on furlough were thanked.

Expenditure

There was less change in expenditure during the period. People costs were relatively fixed and so overall there was a 2% reduction in costs.

Cash

There was an increase in cash in 2020, which came from surplus a small surplus from the sales of properties.

Accounting matters to note.

The former dioceses purchased some properties using loans from the Church Commissioners. It became clear this year that they had not been correctly valued pre-2018 and since. This has resulted in a corrective action of writing down the value of the funds by c.£1m and increasing liabilities by the same amount. This action did not have an impact on cash or free reserves but the debts would need to be settled as each property was sold.

Additional funds had been transferred from restricted funds during 2020. £938k had been transferred from the Pastoral Fund to support the payment of the clergy pension fund deficit. The Board had agreed to do the same over the next two years by when it was anticipated that the deficit would be cleared.

Members asked questions of clarification

Iain Ward-Campbell (Harrogate deanery)

Asked for clarification on the figure of £6m used to refer to the unrestricted reserves. Was this the unrestricted cash available, rather than unrestricted funds appearing on the Balance sheet?

GP replied that the £6m was cash and investments which could be accessed and utilized.

The motion was proposed by Canon Mr Irving Warnett (Bishop's Nominee):

"That the 2020 Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance Annual report and Financial Statements contained in DS 21 06 02 be noted".

Synod moved to the debate of the motion.

No debate was offered.

Synod voted on the motion.

For: 93

Against: 0

Abstain: 1.

The motion was approved.

7. Presentation & Discussion: Costs Review.

Presenters: Jonathan Wood, CEO and Diocesan Secretary and Geoff Park, Chief Finance Officer using a PowerPoint presentation.

JW outlined that 2020 had been challenging for everyone. Financially the diocese had ended the year with sufficient reserves, however, the Board wanted to identify what options were available to it in the uncertain financial future.

GP confirmed that since the September 2020 Board meeting the Board and the Finance Assets and Investments Committee (FAIC) had been reviewing all areas of diocesan expenditure including looking at different ways of doing things and changes to save funds in the future. Diocesan office team structures, plans, salaries increases, noting what was happening in other organisations, reviewing contracts to get better value and maximize investment. Proposals were ranked as green, amber and red. The Board approved the implementation of the green proposals at its meeting in February 2021. These were proposals which could be implemented immediately. Amber proposals were for monitoring and implementation in the future if needed and Red proposals were last resort actions.

The Green proposals

Of these the largest change was the assumptions applicable to stipends and salaries. A 2% salary and stipend increase had been assumed. It was proposed that this be reduced to 1% in 2022, 0.5% in 2023 and 2024. This would be taken to the Board in September 2021 for final approval.

The Green measures did not include planned redundancies but did identify roles where there was

expected staff changes within the next two or three years.

Tendering for the work on the diocesan property would have an impact on the property budget. It was proposed not to reduce the volume of work on diocesan property (eg inspections and the average spend on properties) but to seek better value for the money spent on the work required.

JW confirmed that the proposals were reviewed monthly by FAIC and if needed the implementation of the Amber and Red proposals would be accelerated and this will be reviewed at the September Board meeting.

Synod discussed the presentation

Canon Professor Joyce Hill (General Synod)

Positive communication from the diocese to the parishes was the key to revitalizing parish share payments and to positively encourage parishes not to view the parish share as a burden but to understand what parish share money was used for. Communication from the diocese on this needed to be accessible and emphasise the value of the parish share for the parishes.

The Revd Jeff Payne (Wensley deanery)

Parishes were previously asked to make an extra contribution of £2k. What was the outcome of that? How much was raised?

David Corps (Huddersfield deanery)

Understood the call to increase parish share giving. However, for his parish to make extra share payments it would need to use its reserves. These reserves were earmarked as seed funding for grant applications funding for capital work to the building. He wondered if the diocese could underwrite a liability for grant applications – usually parishes have to have matched funding or pay for work and reclaim later. This was his parishes hurdle to increasing parish share payments. He wondered if the diocese could assist in any way on this.

The Revd Nicholas Clews (Inner Bradford deanery)

Asked what the Amber and Red savings were. Perhaps the diocese could do something for parish clergy needed to encourage parishioners to be proud to pay parish share.

Iain Ward-Campbell

The diocese was sharing proposals for diocesan level and he was grateful for the work the dioceses did to share ideas for improving income but also there is a need for costs control. As the diocese is now looking at costs, it would also be helpful for the diocese to communicate how costs can be kept down at parish level and support PCC Treasurers with this. He felt improvement to parish share overall was going to be affected by giving rather than cost control.

Robert Haskins (Harrogate deanery)

Rochester diocese used a different way of presenting parish share and he supported Canon Professor Joyce Hill's earlier comments on this. In the past, he had been one of a team of financial advisers for the Bishop of Ripon who were available to assist churches. Could this be a possible way forward?

David Ashton (General Synod)

Thanked the Board for the thank you letters sent out to PCCs. This made a great impact on PCC members that they were thanked and appreciated. He asked that this continue as it helped to stimulate discussion in PCCs.

JW replied to the comments. There was a theme in the comments of the importance of positive communication about parish share. The diocese is everyone and so there was a collective responsibility to ensure that the parish clergy and parishes are supported and to be positive and look at better ways to talk about parish share. This could not be done centrally alone but Synod's help was needed to ensure this happened at parish and deanery level. The Amber and Red proposals included tougher decisions about some diocesan posts what tasks and projects would have to stop and how resources would be prioritised. The figures paid in addition by parishes following the letter seeking additional contributions would be sent to Jeff Payne. It was worth noting that the £1m donation was given in response to the circulation of this letter. JW would discuss the proposal about possible support for parishes seeking grants with the Stewardship Team. The Stewardship team has recently been expanded with an addition role funded by the National Church.

Synod took a short break.

Chair: Matthew Ambler

8. Presentation & Discussion: Living in Love and Faith.

Presenters: The Rt Revd Helen-Ann Hartley and Diocesan Living in Love & Faith Advocates: Katherine-Alice Grasham, Sarah Hobbs, The Revd Derek Jones, Marilyn Banister and Archdeacon Andy Jolley.

Synod members were invited to use the Chat function to send feedback to the LLF Group.

Bishop Helen-Ann introduced the framework of the item. She thanked the diocesan advocates for their work. LLF is not a single-issue campaign but a process to encourage thinking on how we can be a generous and inclusive church and talk about matters of faith, gender sexuality friendship and relationships. The Church of England served every community so LLF is about how we do our mission so it is everyone's business.

Why is LLF a new approach?

It is set in the bigger framework of Christian understanding of being human. It is about learning together, acknowledging complexity, looking at different perspectives, and engaging the whole church in learning that feeds into discernment and decision-making. The resources are designed to encourage learning and are underpinned with a multi-disciplinary approach to enrich understanding, real life stories and seek to present different perspectives. The resources range from an LLF book, podcasts, a course to engage with as many as possible, films and a library of over three hundred resources. There is also a dedicated LLF website, which is part of the Church of England website. Pilot courses have run in the diocese and more are planned after the summer. Everyone is encouraged to engage with the learning and the resources are planned to encourage learning well together about complex matters and different perspectives. This is brought together under the Guidance “Braver and Safer”.

When will LLF happen?

LLF has already been happening in the diocese with pilot courses and planned events for various groups including licensed clergy and a youth training session. LLF will continue through the year with feedback to the House of Bishops who commissioned LLF.

Synod members were encouraged to engage with LLF themselves and in their local areas. LLF Next Steps group has been formed to take forward. Its tasks are to encourage learning and to learn from one another as the church engages with LLF and to learn what it means to be a church with diversity and difference. Towards the end of the time to move towards whatever decisions needful for the Church. LLF advocates have been appointed in every diocese to encourage engagement. A Reference Group with diverse members will help with creative and appropriate ways to help churches engage with LLF. The overall goal is to hear what God is saying to the Church today.

Synod watched an LLF video “Pastoral Principles in Conversation” and clip from Session 1 of the LLF Course Film.

Sarah Hobbs introduced the break out groups for Synod members to spend time thinking about what their hopes and fears were about LLF process. Members joined Zoom break out groups.

Bishop Helen-Ann introduced a second LLF video “Stories and teaching” from Session 3 Relationships and friendships

Katherine-Alice Grasham gave an overview of Youth involvement in LLF. Katherine-Alice working with other youth workers and advisers had produced some LLF materials for young people which would be released over the next few weeks. These included a couple of extra sessions for the LLF course covering context and how young people might respond. To ensure the voices of young people are included. An LLF event would be held via Zoom and a link would be circulated for this.

Marilyn Banister chaired a question and answer session

The Revd Canon Rachel Firth (Huddersfield deanery)

Had attended the Bradford trial run with her parish and learnt that getting people to engage was difficult. What people heard was “more pointless bureaucracy” and “more conversation for conversation’s sake”. Therefore, she wondered how we would encourage all parishes, particularly those who are less inclined to engage to be part of the process. If we do not hear everyone’s voice then we have failed in our objective.

The Revd Nicholas Clews (Inner Bradford deanery)

His break out group had wondered if LLF was structured to enable everyone to authentically contribute and not just feel they needed to agree with stronger voices or leaders.

The Revd Jonathan Bish (Wakefield deanery)

He had spoken to a lot of people on “both sides of this” and thought there seemed to be a lot of fear of not knowing what the end game was and fear of what the result was to come out of LLF. Could the group share about how we address preconceptions that there might be a pre-ordained outcome?

The Revd Brunel James (General Synod and Dewsbury & Birstall deanery)

He felt that the Covid crisis was an opportunity as it seems to have enabled people to realise that a growth strategy for their church of increasing the number of people like them hasn't worked and instead the church should be seeking to include others who are not “like us” to include in the life of the church. It could be that these “others” have felt it was not possible to say what their perspective was. LLF will allow the church to show it is more open to be more diverse and not continue just as are.

Marilyn Banister closed the question and answer session but asked Synod members to encourage people to engage with LLF and to contact the LLF advocates or Bishop Helen-Ann with any comments or questions.

The Chair encouraged Synod members to use the chat function to feedback to the team.

He thanked Synod for its engagement during the triennium and for their work for the Synod to Debbie Child and Jonathan Wood each as Secretary to the Synod and to Peter Foskett. He also thanked the Bishop of Leeds for enabling the Chairs of the Synod Houses to chair the Synod.

Synod took a short break.

Chair: The Revd Canon Sam Corley

9. Motion and Presentation: Annual Reports from Boards and Committees for noting and a presentation to Synod from the Diocesan Communications team DS 21 06 03.

Motion: “That the annual reports contained in DS 21 06 03 are received.”

Proposer: The Revd Canon Kathryn Fitzsimons (General Synod)

Presenters: Chris Tate, Director of Communications and Richard Earnshaw, Social and Digital Media Officer.

Chris Tate introduced the presentation on the 2020 work of the Communications Team. Due to the Covid pandemic, Digital and Social media sessions were particularly well received. Sharing the government and church's advice during the pandemic was particularly challenging. A

dedicated Covid 19 session was created on the diocesan website and this continues with links to all available advice which is updated a regularly as possible. Aware of the many pressures on clergy and lay people, the Communications team ensured that only targeted advice was circulated and, working with other diocesan teams, ensured that the bulletins included the maximum amount of information and were localized content where possible. Feedback indicates that these bulletins were very much appreciated. Resources for parishes were created at the start of the pandemic including a toolkit.

Richard Earnshaw spoke about digital and social media. During the previous fifteen months, there had been a great increase in the take up of digital and social media by the church. We hosted a number of webinars, training session and “how to” toolkits and advised on streaming licences and filming in churches. The social media outlets the diocese has presence on proved very valuable. With great numbers of people receiving an engaging with the content produced by the Team. Pandemic brought opportunities to create new content including the national church work on Harvest where the Team worked with Bishop Helen-Ann and recording churches work for those in need. The Team were looking forward to supporting parishes as they emerged from Lockdown and explore mixed modes of worship.

The Revd Canon Kathryn Fitzsimons all been part of annual meetings this report brings together the work of the diocesan teams and she thanked all those who worked to ensure during a difficult year that the diocese has functioned in such a positive way.

The debate was opened.

No debate was offered.

The Revd Canon Kathryn Fitzsimons proposed the motion:

“That the annual reports contained in DS 21 06 03 are received.”

Synod voted on the motion:

For: 91

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

10. Report: General Synod (April 2021)

Synod members had been circulated with a report from Alison Fisher, (General Synod member) DS 21 06 04. Alison has given apologies for the meeting. The Revd Canon Joyce Jones has confirmed she will answer any questions.

There were no questions from the Synod members.

**Extra item under Standing Order 21 added by the President to the Synod
Assistant Bishop Delegation - Bishop Bill Godfrey**

Circulated papers: DS 21 06 05, DS 21 06 05 01

Proposer: The Bishop of Leeds

Synod members had been circulated with a draft instrument of delegation and a Note to Synod.

The Bishop of Leeds outlined that the Draft instrument of delegation allows the Bishop of Leeds to delegate but he had not done this with any of the assistant bishops so far other than that they could minister in the diocese and conduct confirmations.

The Bishop of Leeds explained that Bishop Bill Godfrey had been the Bishop of Peru before he retired to the Leeds Diocese.

Bishop proposed the Motion:

“That this Synod consents to the execution of the draft Instrument of Delegation (DS 21 06 06) by the Bishop of Leeds in favour of the Right Reverend Harold William Godfrey.”

Questions of clarification

Barbara Smith (Brighouse and Elland deanery)

Asked why this motion was necessary.

Archdeacon Jonathan Gough

He confirmed he has worked briefly with Bishop Bill Godfrey he was an exceptional man and he would be a great resource for the diocese.

Bishop of Leeds

When clergy retire, they will ask for the bishop’s permission to officiate. Bishops when they retire becoming an honorary assistant bishop is similar in that, if the diocesan bishop asks them to do so, they can confirm.

Edwina Offori (Wakefield deanery)

Asked if the Bishop of Ripon still existed if this bishop is required to assist the diocesan bishop?

Bishop of Leeds replied that this had no impact on the suffragan bishops who had delegated functions which are very specific. The motion was not do to with delegation to area bishops except where an area bishop may ask an honorary assistant bishop to undertake some work on their behalf. Does not impinge on the role of the area bishops.

Synod voted on the motion

For: 90

Against: 1

Abstain: 2

The motion was approved.

11. Introductory Presentation: “Saving Creation: Strategic action to combat climate change”.

Jemima Parker, Diocesan Environment officer, gave a brief introduction to the Saving Creation initiative which was to be discussed in more detail at the 16 October 2021 Synod.

Across diocese seen and felt the effect of climate change. General Synod had called the church to move towards a carbon net zero target by 2030. In response the diocesan Board have commissioned a carbon net zero working group to map and develop an action plan to move to carbon neutrality. The group worked hard to consult all bishops, archdeacons and diocesan teams to ensure the action plan was deliverable. A number of toolkits about how to reduce carbon emissions had been produced: one each for schools, clergy and churches. Training is also available via the diocesan digital learning platform. There were also diocesan environment champions and a Diocesan Environment group on hand to assist.

The diocese was one of the first to achieve an eco diocese award.

Saving Creation strategy would be brought to the October Synod. In the meantime Jemima encouraged Synod members to use the toolkit to make an impact in their churches and community.

The Chair thanked Synod for their expressions of encouragement as he looked towards becoming the Bishop of Stockport.

12. Closing of Synod triennium Act of Worship.

The Bishop of Leeds led the Synod in an act of worship put together by The Revd Canon Michael Gisbourne and The Revd Canon Paul Maybury (Canon Precentors). Jen Read (Headingley deanery) read the reading and the intercessions were led by The Revd Joanna Seabourne (Headingley deanery).

13. Bishop of Leeds Blessing and Close

The Bishop of Leeds thanked everyone who had taken part in the Synod and gave the blessing.

Signed:.....

Date:

Diocese of Leeds

Nineteenth Diocesan Synod, Saturday 12 June 2021

Presidential Address

I am doing a run of Pause for Thoughts on Zoe Ball's Radio 2 breakfast show at the moment. The first was last Tuesday. What happens with this slot is that I agree a theme with the editor the morning before, do the script, take on board any comments, then finalise before it gets "compiled". Sometimes I go rogue and write two or three on different themes, so he has a choice - it all depends how fertile my imagination is on the day and how much headspace I have.

Last week I wrote a quick script about the Viking invasion of England and its impact on Whitby. Exactly! No surprise, then, when the editor texted me with words to the effect of: not a classic Baines script, not Radio 2 and could you try something else? One moral of this story is: never ever write for public media if you aren't prepared to hear criticism, bin it and start again. Not bad advice for preaching, either, I think.

Anyway, what I had hoped to muse on in relation to Whitby and the Vikings was this. When we visited Whitby again a couple of months ago we spent some time in the ruins of the abbey. There is a plaque there that (rather blithely) says that the Vikings paid a visit in the late eighth century, after which there wasn't a Christian community there until one returned two hundred years later. The Vikings sacked Lindisfarne in 793 and Whitby wasn't far behind as the Scandinavians launched their first package tour to Britain.

Did you notice that timeframe? Two hundred years. Two centuries. Now, doesn't that provide a bit of perspective on whatever is happening in the immediate present? (I was speaking - the same day as the Zoe Ball gig - with Imam Qari Asim at an online Common Purpose event for senior leaders in the north, and was asked about resilience in leaders. I responded with my own perspective-calibrator for when I hit major problems or challenges: in the context of the entire history of the known universe, will we survive this? The answer is usually 'yes'.)

Now, I know I bang on about time and perspective a lot, but I make no apology for this. We cannot read the Scriptures unless we have a proper sense of how long time takes. The Exodus followed four hundred years of exile and growing oppression in Egypt - fine if you lived at the beginning or towards the end and, therefore, have a memory of 'home' to hold onto or some hope of resolution to inspire you; but, what if you were born two hundred years in and none of your preceding or succeeding three or four generations had known anything other than captivity? Following liberation *from*, the people spent a generation in the desert having to either die off or sort themselves out for what they had been freed *for*. Only then could they enter the land of promise and even begin to establish a different sort of society in which justice and mercy were the dominant contours of their common life.

So, we too easily read a plaque about two hundred years of defeated vacancy in Whitby and breeze over to the next bit of 'interesting information' without attempting to live into that experience and how it might have shaped our Christian ancestors in Yorkshire.

Why am I talking about this today? Well, I want to encourage us in this final Synod of the extended triennium to keep a sense of perspective as we look back at an extraordinary couple of years and look ahead to what the world - and the church - might look like in the next few years. We know in our heads that the only constant in this world is 'change', but we find it equally hard to navigate change (a) proactively and (b) where it is thrust upon us. Change is always changing: we either shape our future or we

complain about being victims of other people's decisions and choices. The former is healthier for both individuals and communities.

So, today I want to thank all of you who have given your time, attention, wisdom and gifts to the life of the Diocese of Leeds through its Diocesan Synod since 2017. Remember that in 2017 we were only three years old - a toddler Diocese in the grand scheme of things. We had begun to turn our synodical attention away from basic matters of constitutional detail onto a strategy for growth and development. I remember encouraging members of the synod to bring from deaneries the wider concerns of the Christian Church in a challenging society - not least in the wake of the extremely divisive Brexit referendum in 2016 and all that followed (and continues). Then the pandemic hit and we all entered uncharted territory, having to hold our ministry and mission in tension with government instruction, all with total uncertainty of how long this would last, what damage it might do, and what we might look like once we emerged at some point in the future.

So, my gratitude is neither superficial nor trivial. As the Bishop, I am so proud of the maturity, transparency and vision with which the Diocese and synod have navigated this strange land to this point. I hope many of you will stand again for the synod as we shape our future at a point when we cannot know what shape we are in (in terms of finances, congregations, demography, patterns of church life, and so on). Yes, we have learned a lot about how things can be done differently in a hybrid world, but we need all our collective energies, wisdom and discernment - to say nothing of courage and commitment - as we emerge into a new world.

I also hope you will encourage younger people to join us and get stuck in as, together in synod, we seek to be what Walter Brueggemann called "freshly faithful" in the next three years and beyond. We need to be a diocese of all the talents, so to speak.

But, speaking of talent, we also say farewell today to two of our number who have been integral to our development as a diocese. Canon Sam Corley, chair of the House of Clergy, is leaving us to go west of the Pennines (where the rain is wetter) to be the next Bishop of Stockport in the Diocese of Chester. I know he will be greatly missed across the diocese in so many respects: vocations, synod, civic and business communities in Bradford and Leeds, and so on. Sam, you go with our love, gratitude and prayers as you begin episcopal ministry in a part of the world where the football is simply lamentable.

We also say good bye to Jerry Lepine, Dean of Bradford for the last seven years. Jerry came with no illusions about the size of the task, but has been positively integral to the essentially trinitarian innovation of working three cathedrals (and three deans) in one diocese. Jerry is notable for always being cheerful, whatever the challenge, and has brought a new shape and confidence to Bradford Cathedral. Civic representatives have expressed to me their misery that Jerry is to retire at the end of July. Jerry and Christine will be moving to Derby in retirement and they, too, go with our love and gratitude and prayers. (The process for identifying the next Dean has begun and final interviews are expected to take place in November, suggesting that we will have someone in place in the spring.)

Nothing stands still. Archdeacon Anne Dawtry has announced her retirement from 31 October, but this will not be her final synod; so, we won't say farewell to her today.

Today we do have to attend to serious business. It is no secret that our Diocesan finances have been hit hard by the pandemic and its consequences. I am hugely grateful to Irving Warnett and the Finance, Assets and Investment Committee who work so hard on our behalf to ensure that our financial decision-making is strategic and not simply reactive. Geoff Park and Jonathan Wood are doing excellent work to manage

money and other resources to best effect in extremely challenging circumstances. This synod will today hear more about this and how our Cost Review might develop further.

What is clear is that we will have serious decisions to make in the years ahead. We won't always know whether we are making the right ones - life isn't like that, and we don't have the gift of knowing everything the future might hold that, had we known it, might have led to different decisions in the past. But, we honour the integrity of all involved as we wrestle with these hard questions about how to reduce cost and increase income across the board. Please pray for all involved.

Yet, as we know all too well, the world doesn't stop while a pandemic runs its course. Today we will look at the Living in Love and Faith process as the Church of England - uniquely, I think - tries to navigate a course through questions of sexuality, gender and identity which are the subject of massive struggle and debate across society at the moment. Some people have assumed that LLF is aimed at smuggling in a decision to change the church's teaching or to simply bolster the status quo. In fact, LLF is about bringing together Christians of different experience, conviction and perspective in order to place argument or discussion within relationship. It might be that no one changes their mind on these issues; but, it is hoped that their mind, attitude and thinking might at the very least be shaped by new relationships that allow honesty, integrity and faithful belief to be heard, witnessed and appreciated for what it is.

To this end, I am called back to Paul's letter to the church in Philippi when he urges this divided community of young Christians to "have the same mind" - not, as you might think, the same opinion or view - which he goes on to say is "the mind of Christ" who laid aside his rights and claims, stepped down from a place of invulnerability, and opened himself to the complexities of a mucky world and complicated humanity. The focus here is on relationship and humility, not on uniformity. (I'll resist the temptation to do another Bible study here.)

And all this is going on while we face the climate crisis and our responsibilities in it. The wider church is addressing governance, simplicity, emergence and effectiveness of our structures and processes. Some of us are involved deeply in some of these groups, and we need your prayers as well as your sympathy!

So, let me conclude. Earlier I quoted Walter Brueggemann when he speaks of us being "freshly faithful" as we emerge from the pandemic into an uncertain and different world and church. In another context he urges what he calls a "tenacious solidarity". This tenacity is, of course, rooted in what the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka called a "solidarity of the broken". We belong together and we are in this together. We need no reminder of our brokenness, for Christian faith starts with our brokenness as a reality (but moves on to redemption and renewal and resurrection). But, when I see the failure, blindness or weakness of my neighbour, I see through it to my own. Grace, generosity, mercy and love are what characterise Christians doing their business in and through the church, but always for the sake of the world we are called to serve in humility and confidence and with fragile faithfulness.

We turn to our business in this spirit. Even if the Vikings or a coronavirus do their damage, they do not have the final word. God does. And he who has called us is faithful.

The Rt Revd Nicholas Baines
Bishop of Leeds